

The National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) is a network of established and emerging rural institutions that work together to strengthen rural America. The principal members of the network are State Rural Development Councils in 37 states.

Each of the State Councils, which are comprised of active members from a broad range of rural development-related organizations, is served by a full-time executive director. States differ in how they are organized and in the rural issues they decide to address.

This profile is one in a series highlighting the work of the State Councils.

For more information about the National Rural Development Partnership:

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**National Rural
Development
Partnership**

State Profile

Rural Development Council of Michigan

In 1993, Governor Engler worked with the National Rural Development Partnership to establish the Rural Development Council of Michigan (RDCM).

Within a few years, RDCM grew into a large umbrella organization with more than 1,500 participants. The Council continually promotes the active involvement of individuals from six partner groups: non-profit and for-profit interests; local, federal, and state governments; and Native American tribes. It identifies barriers to rural development, brings together resources and expertise, and helps to coordinate issue resolution. Emphasizing innovation and collaboration, RDCM finds new, nontraditional ways to address the needs of rural Michigan. By building an effective alliance of its various partners, the Council has created a strong voice for rural Michigan.

RDCM's governing board has identified five primary challenges facing rural Michigan. These are land use, health and human services, economic development, infrastructure

and community facilities, and leadership development. Several issue committees and project teams carry out various activities addressing these issues.



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RDCM has 1,500 participants from across the state. Its 32-member governing board has representation from a wide variety of organizations including:

- ▼ Consumers Energy Company
- ▼ Wade-Trim, Inc.
- ▼ Dairy Farmers of America
- ▼ Weberwoods Communications
- ▼ Michigan Farm Bureau
- ▼ Michigan Integrated Food & Farming Systems
- ▼ Michigan State University
- ▼ Michigan Alliance of Cooperatives
- ▼ Big Creek Township
- ▼ City of Ishpeming
- ▼ Clare County Commission
- ▼ Pinconning Township
- ▼ Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- ▼ Family Independence Agency
- ▼ Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
- ▼ Cooperative Elevator Co.
- ▼ Smith Equities Corp.
- ▼ USDA Rural Development
- ▼ USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
- ▼ USDA Farm Service Agency
- ▼ Hannahville Indian Community
- ▼ Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
- ▼ Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan
- ▼ Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
- ▼ Great Lakes Oil Company
- ▼ Region 2 Planning Commission
- ▼ Detroit Edison
- ▼ Michigan Center for Rural Health
- ▼ Gove Associates, Inc.



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Rural Development Council of Michigan at Work

Land Use and Farmland Preservation

RDCM has been very active in land use activities and has focused on partnership building, public education and awareness, leadership development, and technical expertise. RDCM has provided the leadership for numerous public forums on land use and farmland preservation. In addition to community workshops to educate citizens about various land use strategies, RDCM organized a state-wide land use conference, sponsored by an unprecedented 24 organizations and attended by 550 individuals. The Council also worked with several partners to produce videos on land use and purchasing farmers' development rights.

For the past three years, RDCM, in partnership with the Michigan Farm Bureau and other organizations, sponsored and organized the Ultimate Farmland Preservation Tour (UFP Tour). Tour participants, including urban mayors and other elected officials, realtors, farmers, and other community leaders, spend five days learning about successful land use strategies and programs in Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The UFP Tour provides an opportunity for individuals to visit first hand with other community leaders and to see over 160,000 acres of permanently preserved farmland in eight counties. Over 10 percent of the membership of the Michigan House of Representatives has gone on the UFP Tour, which has partly resulted in passage of a number of legislative land use initiatives, including the establishment of purchase of development rights programs to protect farmland.

Rural Health Care

RDCM has made improving health care in rural Michigan a top priority. In addition to making presentations at numerous statewide health care conferences on the importance of health care in economic development, RDCM assisted the Michigan Center for Rural Health in developing a state strategic rural health care plan. This plan led to the passage of a rural health care plan by the state

legislature. RDCM also has performed extensive outreach in rural areas for the MIChild and Healthy Kids health insurance programs to enroll more children into these programs.

Gogebic Range Water Project

Several municipalities in Gogebic County desperately needed to replace their drinking water systems. Some of these communities were ordered to do so by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality because of contamination, and some were forced to put economic expansion efforts on hold because of their inability to supply additional water. Over several years, RDCM worked with the Gogebic Range Water Authority on designing a regional municipal water system. Building a regional system would reduce the overall cost of replacing individual community water systems, making a water project feasible for small communities. The Council also helped secure over \$6 million from USDA to fund this project, which will benefit more than 2,500 residents in four neighboring communities.

*"Between all of us,
the Council
has tremendous
resources and
expertise to offer."*

**Clancy Eldredge,
Board of Directors**